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The House majority is in play next year after a weak GOP midterm showing



Rep. David Schweikert, R-Ariz., hands out candy and flags at an Independence Day parade on Tuesday, July 4, 2023 in Phoenix.

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The House majority is in play next year after a weak GOP midterm showing

From Front

By JONATHAN J. COOPER

Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) —

Republican Rep. David Schweikert used to win his wealthy, suburban Phoenix congressional district by nearly 30 points. Then Donald Trump was elected president, and his victories started shrinking.

Schweikert, who won his last election by just 3,200 votes, is now among the top 2024 targets for Democrats, who sense better-than-expected odds of retaking the House majority they lost last year.

After an anemic showing in the midterms, Republicans have virtually no cushion in their quest to retain control of the House, which was made all the more complicated by a surprise U.S. Supreme Court decision last month that will likely bring two new safely Democratic districts. Democrats need to pick up just five seats to control the House.

Republicans are counting on a strong showing from incumbents like Schweikert, one of 18 GOP lawmakers representing districts that supported Democrat Joe Biden for president in 2020. Many are in upscale suburbs like Scottsdale that lean conservative but have rejected Trump and the party he now dominates.

In contrast, only five Democrats represent districts that Trump won. "I've been Republican since JFK," said Roy Ross, a 74-year-old retired oil company manager who registered as an independent when he moved to Schweikert's district from Tennessee two years ago. "But the last two elections, I just said, 'I can't do that.'" Still, he said, "I can't say that I'm hearing a lot from Democrats, either."

Schweikert's fate in Arizona, and that of the GOP's House majority, will come down to the decisions of voters like Ross.

Other factors make for a volatile 2024 House landscape and point to terrain much more favorable to Democrats than what they faced in last year's mid-



Rep. David Schweikert, R-Ariz., holding his one-year-old son Matthew, speaks at an Independence Day parade on Tuesday, July 4, 2023 in Phoenix.

Associated Press

terms. Trump is the early front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination, which could drive up turnout among his critics and force vulnerable Republicans to take uncomfortable positions. And abortion, which helped power Democratic victories in the midterms, remains salient a year after the conservative majority on the Supreme Court eliminated the constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy.

"Between overturning state-level protections for reproductive freedoms to prioritizing tax breaks for the wealthiest few and big corporations, vulnerable Republicans are signing their own pink slips ahead of next November's election," said Courtney Rice, a spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the House Democrats' campaign arm.

Republicans see plenty of reasons for optimism. Looking to expand the playing field beyond the 18 districts that voted for Biden, Republicans are targeting 37 other districts where they believe a Democratic incumbent is vulnerable.

Two Democrats from swing districts — Reps. Elissa Slotkin in Michigan and Katie

Porter in California — are leaving their House seats to run for the Senate, improving the odds for Republicans who won't have to run against an incumbent. Biden's lackluster popularity could be a drain on his party, and prices for gas, food and housing remain high. "Democrats are reminding voters why they took away the Democrats' gavels in the first place — extreme, unreasonable, and out of touch," said Rep. Richard Hudson, chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the GOP's House race arm. "Republicans are on offense, recruiting dynamic candidates and out-raising the Democrats, putting us in position to grow our majority."

After Trump's 2016 election, Schweikert's district started trending toward the center as some voters who historically backed Republicans reluctantly voted for Democrats or left their ballots blank. Redistricting ahead of the 2022 midterms accelerated the trend.

Schweikert eked out a victory of less than 1 percentage point last year against a relatively unknown rival who got minimal support from national Democrats. Neither party will be ignor-

ing the district this time around. Democrats have already started attacking Schweikert over abortion. The race has attracted interest from a crowded field of Democrats, with no obvious front-runner.

Schweikert has walked a fine line, managing to avoid associating too closely with Trump without jeopardizing his path to the GOP nomination. On abortion, he says he opposes it but believes it should be left to the states.

"The parties have changed," Schweikert said, describing the district's shifting voting patterns between conversations with doctors, entrepreneurs and a physicist at a neighborhood parade in Arcadia, one of Phoenix's most prestigious enclaves. "These people want me to fixate on their prosperity and not the eccentricities of the virus, the last election, those sorts of things."

The U.S. Supreme Court found last month that Alabama's congressional map violated the Voting Rights Act, a ruling that will require the state to create a second majority-Black district that strategists in both parties believe will be safely Democratic. Thanks to the ruling, a similar process is

likely to play out in Louisiana, giving Democrats another safe seat.

In New York, Democrats are hopeful an ongoing lawsuit will allow them to draft a new political map that tilts in their favor. An appeals court on Thursday ordered new congressional lines to be drawn, though Republicans pledged to appeal. But Republicans have the advantage in North Carolina, where conservatives recently took the majority of the state Supreme Court and are expected to draw new maps that favor the GOP. The U.S. Supreme Court just reaffirmed the court's power to get involved. Control of the House will largely come down to staunchly red or blue states that won't get much attention from presidential campaigns.

More than half of the 18 Republican-held districts that Biden won are in New York and California, two states that defied the midterm Democratic successes in much of the rest of the country. Most of the rest are scattered around the West — two in Arizona and one each in New Mexico and Oregon.

Strategists who work on House races believe several factors were behind Democrats' struggles in New York and California, states they usually dominate. They say voters there were uniquely drawn to Republican messaging targeting crime and homelessness and, as residents of states staunchly supportive of abortion rights, were less swayed by fears of losing access. Republicans still see crime and homelessness as potent issues, along with immigration.

"There are two public policy issues that look as though they could dominate next year's election, abortion and immigration," said Dan Schnur, a former Republican strategist who now teaches politics at three California universities. "Both of the parties are not only vulnerable on one of those issues but don't appear to have any clue as to how to deal with them." □

Even the most populous places are pushing for U.S. census corrections

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press

A misplaced naval ship in California. Overlooked college students in New York City. Missed inmates in Texas. These are some of the reasons why the two most populous states and the largest city in the U.S. filed last-minute requests for corrections to their 2020 census figures right before the deadline at the end of last month. California, Texas and New York City were joined by a dozen and a half other stragglers, including Illinois and New Orleans, that made down-to-the-deadline appeals over the numbers that help determine political power and the annual distribution of \$2.8 trillion in federal funding.

In total, nearly 200 requests for corrections were filed by local, state and tribal governments through two programs started by the U.S. Census Bureau to give governments opportunities to have their population totals reviewed and corrected if need be. If successful, any corrections will be applied only to future population estimates used for the rest of the decade in determining federal funding. They can't be used to change how many congressional seats each state was allotted during the apportion-



The sun sets behind the New York skyline, Sunday, Nov. 13, 2022, as seen from Calvary Cemetery. Associated Press

ment process, nor for the data used for redrawing political districts. That's too bad for some cities and states not to mention the two major political parties fighting over every foot of territory in a closely divided nation. If the Democratic-leaning state of New York had counted 89 more residents the equivalent of a small apartment building's tenants in New York City during the 2020 census, it wouldn't have lost a congressional seat. Among Republican-controlled states, Texas had been expected

to gain three additional congressional seats instead of the two it gained after the 2020 census.

In one of the most unusual reasons given for a correction request, sailors on an aircraft carrier in Southern California may have been assigned to the wrong city's population because of the location of the ship's slip. Here's a look at some of the last-minute requests for corrections made by states and cities:

CALIFORNIA

The slip-up, so to speak, reportedly took place on the

aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln. California officials believe its more than 5,000 crew members were wrongly assigned to San Diego's population total instead of neighboring National City's figures. Although part of the ship is located in San Diego, officials said what matters is where crew members get off and on the ship: the part of Naval Base San Diego in National City.

"Kansas doesn't have this problem," said H.D. Palmer, deputy director of external affairs for the Department

of Finance in California, the most populous U.S. state with 39 million residents.

California officials also contend that almost 10,000 college students and inmates were overlooked during the census. They were among the most difficult to count as campuses closed and prisons were locked down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with the beginning of the head count. The Census Bureau created a separate program to handle these challenges.

California officials said they waited until the deadline to make their filings because they wanted to first see if local municipalities would file requests.

ILLINOIS

Illinois, the sixth most populous U.S. state with 12.5 million residents, was one of six states that had undercounts of its population, according to the Census Bureau. In his correction request, Gov. JB Pritzker didn't specify how many people he believes were missed but cited the bureau's estimate of almost 2% of the population. Among the omissions were residents in nursing homes, dorms, homeless shelters, residential treatment facilities and jails, Pritzker said in one of two letters submitted to the Census Bureau. □

DOJ urges judge to not postpone Trump's classified documents trial

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department urged a judge Thursday to reject Donald Trump's efforts to postpone his classified documents trial, saying there was no basis for an "open-ended" delay sought by his lawyers. Federal prosecutors last month proposed a Dec. 11 trial for Trump, who is charged with 37 felony counts related to the mishandling of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate, though the actual date will be up to the judge. Trump's lawyers

countered this week with a request for a delay. They did not propose a specific date but said the case concerned novel legal issues, and proceeding with a trial within six months is "unreasonable" and would "result in a miscarriage of justice." On Thursday, prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team responded by asking U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon to not postpone the trial beyond the December date they recommended.

They rejected the idea that any of the legal arguments the defense intends to raise

requires postponement of the trial, saying they've already produced grand jury transcripts and unclassified witness statements. They said that in the next week, they will produce witness statements for interviews conducted through June 23, or two weeks after the indictment was returned. Though the defense lawyers had said a continuance was necessary because they hadn't yet received classified evidence in the case, prosecutors noted that as of Thursday, only two of the attorneys have submitted an appli-



Former President Donald Trump speaks at a campaign event, Saturday, July 8, 2023, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

cation for a security clearance that would enable them to access such evidence. □

Houston to spend millions to relocate residents living near polluted Union Pacific rail yard

By JUAN A. LOZANO

Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Houston plans to spend millions of dollars to relocate residents from neighborhoods located near a rail yard polluted by a cancer-linked wood preservative that has been blamed for an increase in cancer cases, the city's mayor announced Thursday.

Texas health officials in 2019 identified a cancer cluster in Houston's historically Black Fifth Ward and Kashmere Gardens neighborhoods. A second cluster was identified in 2021. Health officials have found higher rates of respiratory cancers as well as childhood cancers, including acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Residents and local officials have long blamed the high number of cancer cases on contamination from a Union Pacific rail yard near both neighborhoods. Creosote, which has been associated with an increased risk of contracting cancer, was used for more than 80 years at the site until the 1980s. City officials say the contamination has reached the groundwater in the neighborhoods.

In September 2022, the Houston Health Department announced that testing of surface soil samples from around the Union Pa-



A prop skeleton dressed in a "Creosote Killed Me" T-shirt sits in the middle of the seating during a community meeting put on by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, held at the Deluxe Theater Tuesday, May 3, 2022 in Houston.

Associated Press

cific rail yard found dioxin, a highly toxic chemical compound associated with cancer and other health risks.

Mayor Sylvester Turner said the city has spoken with Union Pacific for months about helping relocate residents, but the company has indicated it wants to wait until additional testing is complete. Testing of the area through a consent order from the Environmental Protection Agency is set to be conducted through September, with the results scheduled to be released

by December. Union Pacific "has an open invitation to help fund this (relocation) effort and to participate in this process, if they so choose. But they not only have a legal obligation, they have a moral obligation. How many more families do you need to see suffer? How many more children must die before they have a moral obligation to step in?" Turner said during a news conference. In a statement, Union Pacific said additional testing is "required to accurately de-

termine the true extent and source of contamination in the neighborhood. Relocation should be based on a human health risk assessment."

Union Pacific said it's focused on the community's safety, and it has "made measurable progress with on-site clean-up since acquiring the property in a 1997 merger and are committed to finishing the job." Residents of the neighborhoods say they have long felt their concerns for their health and safety have been ignored by the rail-

road company and by local officials.

Pamela Matthews, 61, who has lived in the Fifth Ward neighborhood since she was 5 years old, said Thursday was the one-year anniversary of her mother's death from cancer. Her brother is currently fighting cancer. Her family home is two blocks from the Union Pacific rail yard.

"My kids, my grandkids, that was the family home. We put everything we had vested into that property and we made it through and we were happy and we had God and we didn't think for one second that we were at risk," Matthews said during Thursday's news conference.

Turner said relocating families from among the 100 properties that have been affected by the contamination could cost up to \$26 million. The city is looking at internal as well as federal funding to help pay for the relocation program, which will be put together by a strike force made up of health, housing and community development officials.

No timetable was given for when the relocation process could be completed. Turner said the relocation effort will extend beyond his administration as his final term as mayor concludes at the end of December. □



Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, talks to reporters at the Capitol in Washington, May 16, 2023.

Associated Press

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday

said it is "irresponsible" of a Republican senator from Alabama to block confirmation of military officers in protest of a Defense De-

Republican senator should drop his 'irresponsible' protest

partment policy that pays for travel when a service member has to go out of state to get an abortion or reproductive care.

"He's jeopardizing U.S. security by what he's doing," Biden said of Sen. Tommy Tuberville. "It's just totally irresponsible in my view."

More than 260 nominations are stalled by Tuberville, including Biden's pick for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, America's top military officer. The U.S. Marine Corps is currently

without a confirmed leader for the first time in a century because of the block. It also affects scores of one-, two- and three-star officers who are assigned to new base commands.

"I'd be willing to talk to him if I thought there was any possibility of changing his ridiculous position," Biden said during a press conference with the president of Finland. Biden traveled to Finland as a show of support for the new NATO member, fol-

lowing the NATO summit in Lithuania this week.

"The idea that we're injecting into fundamental foreign policy decisions what, in fact, is a domestic social debate on social issues is bizarre," Biden said.

There were also efforts at the Pentagon to encourage Tuberville to drop his opposition. The senator told reporters later Thursday that he had just spoken with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and expected to speak with him again. □

Iraqi officials are defending a barter deal with Iran

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and ABDURAHMAN ZEYAD

Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi officials defended Thursday a deal inked this week to barter oil for gas with Iran, saying it does not violate U.S. sanctions on Tehran but will help alleviate a worsening electricity crisis in Iraq.

The remarks come as the government in Baghdad struggles to balance between its two key allies, Washington and Tehran. A previous arrangement in which Iraq was buying gas from Iran and paying dollars for it was held up because Washington declined to approve sanctions waivers. That in turn led Iran to cut the gas supply, triggering severe power shortages in Iraq.

After decades of electricity shortages because of war, corruption and mismanagement, oil-rich Iraq has become heavily reliant on imported Iranian gas to meet its electricity needs. The shortages in recent months are in part due to U.S. restrictions on transferring funds to Iran.

Imports from Iran are especially vital during the scorching summer months



Water buffaloes swim near the Nihran Bin Omar oil field north of Basra, Iraq, Wednesday, March 22, 2023.

when Iraqis are forced to pay for private diesel generators or suffer through temperatures that often exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). Washington has granted some exemptions to its sanction on Iran over Tehran's disputed nuclear program to allow Iraq to meet its energy needs.

On Tuesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia

al-Sudani announced the barter deal with Iran but warned that Washington still has not granted a waiver for Baghdad to pay \$11 billion it currently owes to Tehran, leaving the money trapped in Iranian accounts in the state-owned Trade Bank of Iraq. As a result, he said Iran had cut its gas exports since the beginning of July, and Baghdad's supply has de-

clined by over 50%. After the barter deal, al-Sudani said the "supply of Iranian gas has resumed" and would "return to the same quantities as previously." According to a senior political official close to al-Sudani's government, the barter agreement would see Iraq send 250,000 barrels of crude oil to Iran daily. The official spoke to The Associated Press on condition

Associated Press

of anonymity to discuss the deal. The official said U.S. sanctions would not be violated because they apply to financial transactions — and not barter deals. Still, Iraq has not officially notified Washington of the arrangement, he said.

The U.S. State Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment. There was no immediate comment from Tehran. Washington has been concerned about Iran's relationship with Iraq, especially with large number of Iran-backed groups in its government and parliament.

The United States in late 2022 tightened measures on Iraq accessing its foreign reserves housed in the Federal Reserve, after suspecting money was being transferred to Iran, Syria, and other sanctioned entities. The move led to a drop in the value of the Iraqi dinar and a spike in public anger in Iraq.

Yesar Al-Maleki, an analyst at the Middle East Economic Survey, said cash-strapped Iran has been putting pressure on Baghdad to urge Washington for waivers. □

Thousands protest outside U.S. offices in Tel Aviv

By JULIA FRANKEL

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Thousands of protesters gathered outside the main U.S. diplomatic office in Tel Aviv Thursday night, calling upon the U.S. to condemn Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to overhaul the country's judiciary.

The gathering came days after President Joe Biden called members of Netanyahu's far-right government "extreme" and said that supporters of Israel's West Bank settlements were "part of the problem." Netanyahu's allies, who comprise the most far-right Israeli government ever, have proposed a series of

changes to the Israeli legal system aimed at weakening what they say are the excessive powers of unelected judges. The proposed changes include giving Netanyahu's allies control over the appointment of judges and the power to overturn court decisions they do not support. Protesters say the plan will destroy the country's fragile system of checks and balances and concentrate power in the hands of Netanyahu and his allies.

Protesters, who are now in their seventh month of demonstrations, fear that Netanyahu's plans will strain Israel's close alliance with the U.S. Standing outside

the U.S. Embassy Branch Office, they waved American flags and LGBTQ+ pride flags and brandished signs reading "SOS" and "Mayday!" The overhaul has drawn consternation from Biden and American Jews. On Sunday, Biden told CNN that Israel's current government has some "of the most extreme members" he has ever seen and criticized their support for West Bank settlements, built on occupied lands sought by the Palestinians for a future state. He also urged Netanyahu to show "moderation" with the judicial overhaul. Israeli hardliners rejected Biden's criticism. National Security Minister It-



A man waves Israeli and U.S. flags during a protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government to overhaul the judicial system, outside of the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Tel Aviv, Israel on Thursday, July 13, 2023.

Associated Press

amar Ben-Gvir, a firebrand settler leader, said that Israel is "no longer another star in the American flag." Biden has so far declined to invite Netanyahu to the White House, normally a standard courtesy extend-

ed to Israeli leaders. Israel's figurehead president, Isaac Herzog, is set to visit Washington next week, and has been invited to address a joint session of Congress on July 19 to celebrate Israel's 75th anniversary. □

U.N. court rejects Nicaragua's case in a long-running maritime dispute

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — The United Nations' top court on Thursday rejected a case brought by Nicaragua in a decades-long dispute with Colombia over maritime borders and entitlements in the Caribbean. The International Court of Justice dismissed Nicaragua's bid to gain economic rights over an area of the Caribbean Sea that lies more than 200 nautical miles (230 statute miles, 370 kilometers) from its shores.

Nicaragua wanted the international court to review the limits of its continental shelf, and determine new maritime boundaries for the Central American nation.

Colombia already claims exclusive economic rights in much of the area that lies to the east of Nicaragua's 200 nautical mile boundary. Bogota argued that there is no precedent for extending a country's 200-nautical-mile zone, when it clashes with that of another nation.

Members of Colombia's legal team hugged in court after the ruling, and President Gustavo Petro tweeted that it was "a great victory for Colombia in The Hague."



Nicaragua's agent Carlos Jose Arguello Gomez, left, greets Colombia's agent Eduardo Valencia Ospina, right, at the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, Thursday, July 13, 2023, where the United Nations' highest court delivered its judgment in a long-running maritime border dispute between Nicaragua and Colombia.

He added that he hoped the ruling "ends the controversy over our borders, and we will now focus on the sustainable development of our archipelago." The area has long been claimed by both countries, and Nicaragua gained fishing rights over a big portion in a 2012 ruling by the world court in The Hague. But Colombia's navy has continued to patrol the waters, which are also used by drug traffickers. Colombia's

maritime claims are linked to its sovereignty over the San Andres and Providencia Archipelago, which lies about 700 kilometers (435 miles) north of Colombia's Caribbean coast but only 110 kilometers (68 miles) from Nicaragua's coast. The world court's president, Joan E. Donoghue, said that a country's right to claim a continental shelf beyond the 200-nautical-mile limit cannot "extend within 200 nautical miles

from the baselines of another state." The baselines are points on land from which the continental shelf is measured.

"Nicaragua is not entitled to an extended continental shelf within 200 nautical miles from the baselines of San Andres and Providencia," Donoghue said. The decision means the world court didn't have to review maritime boundaries between Colombia and Nicaragua, established by

Associated Press

the court in a 2012 ruling, which have been under dispute for the past two decades.

The leader of Nicaragua's delegation, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, said that his country would study the judgment "because it has consequences in a very large and complicated area." But he added that "in principle, obviously, whatever the court said, Nicaragua will comply with it." Under international law, coastal states have sovereignty over waters extending 12 nautical miles beyond their coastlines. They have exclusive economic and environmental rights over the seabed and waters that extend up to 200 nautical miles beyond their coast. However, some countries have tried to obtain jurisdiction over underwater features that lie beyond that limit, by proving that these features are connected to their continental shelves that is the shallow seabed that extends beyond the coast. A 1928 treaty between Colombia and Nicaragua recognized Colombia's sovereignty over the islands of San Andres and Providencia, and gave Colombia economic rights over most of the waters around San Andres. □

Record monsoon rains have killed more than 100 people in northern India



People living along the banks of the river Yamuna sit at a flooded underpass in New Delhi, India, Thursday, July 13, 2023.

Associated Press

By ASHOK SHARMA and RISHI LEKHI
Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Schools and colleges were closed after record monsoon rains led to massive waterlogging, road caves-in, collapsed homes and gridlocked traffic in large parts of northern India, killing more than 100 people over two weeks, officials said Thursday.

At least 88 people died, 42 of them in the past five days, and more than 100 were injured in the worst hit-mountainous Himachal Pradesh state where cars, buses, bridges and houses were swept away by swirling flood waters, a state government statement said. The region is nearly 500 kilometers (310 miles) north of New Delhi.

Twelve people have died of rain-related incidents since Wednesday in Uttar Pradesh state, said Shishir Singh, a state government spokesman.

Nine of them drowned, two died after being struck by lightning and one was killed by a snake bite, Singh said.

One person died in New Delhi and four were killed in the Indian-controlled section of Kashmir, officials said.

Authorities used helicopters to rescue nearly 300 people, mostly tourists, who were stranded in the Chandertal area in Himachal Pradesh state since Saturday. □

Discover the Art of Sunday Brunch: Tara Lounge at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort Unveils a New Culinary Experience Crafted by Elements' Executive Chef Alexander Powell

(Oranjestad)—Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, acclaimed as the #18 Best Hotel in the World and #1 in the Caribbean on TripAdvisor, is excited to announce a new Sunday Brunch experience served exclusively at the resort's Tara Lounge every Sunday from 11:15 AM to 3 PM. The brunch, personally curated by Executive Chef Alexander Powell, will offer a unique combination of exquisite flavors and a mesmerizing ambiance, right in the heart of the award-winning resort.

The Tara Lounge offers an inviting indoor setting fully air-conditioned, as well as an outdoor deck, both providing the perfect ambiance for an intimate dining experience. For \$110 per couple (only \$55 per person) diners can savor an array of tantalizing offerings, including fine artisanal cuts, delectable crêpes, shrimp cocktail, broiled salmon filet, fine Argentinean beef tenderloin, New York-style cheesecake, and much more. The meal is beautifully complemented by a full bottle of our signature celebratory Champagne, Veuve Ambal Crémant de Bourgogne, adding a bubbly touch to this gastronomic journey. Reservations are required



due to limited seating, and the experience is exclusive to adults (18+).

A Culinary Maestro Shaping Brunch Delights

Executive Chef Alexander Powell is an acclaimed culinary artist with over two decades of experience in the industry. As a graduate of the esteemed New York Restaurant School, Chef Powell honed his skills under the tutelage of Michelin-starred chef Jean George Vongerichten. He played a crucial role at Jean George's JoJo restaurant in New York City, contributing significantly to the achievement of a

coveted three-star rating from the New York Times. His culinary prowess was further honed during his tenure at the EDITION Hotel in Miami, where he worked closely with Jean-Georges in developing special dining experiences. His eclectic background and international culinary exposure bring a unique richness to his creations, which he now applies daily to the internationally acclaimed Elements Restaurant.

The brunch menu is a testament to Chef Powell's innovative approach, highlighting his attention to detail. "Every dish we serve is a

marriage of my years of culinary experience and the vibrancy of fresh ingredients," said Chef Powell. "At the Tara Lounge, we have the perfect venue to deliver this incredible brunch experience, distinct from our regular offerings at Elements

Restaurant. I'm excited for our customers and guests to immerse themselves in this unique experience."

For reservations, visit: <https://www.elementsaruba.com/> or call +297 583-1100 ext 3.

About Elements Restaurant

Elements Restaurant is an award-winning restaurant located at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba. Recognized by TripAdvisor's 2021 Travellers Choice Awards as the Number 2 restaurant in the world for Date Night and honored with the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence, Elements is renowned for its globally-inspired fare crafted from natural, organic, and locally-sourced ingredients. For more information about Elements Restaurant, please visit www.elementsaruba.com. □

Blackstone Beach

(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something differ-

ent—or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba: the stones that cover the beaches and the shape of it has been crafted for thousand years via volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.



Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach.

There, you can park your

car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite being called a beach, do note that it is not ad-

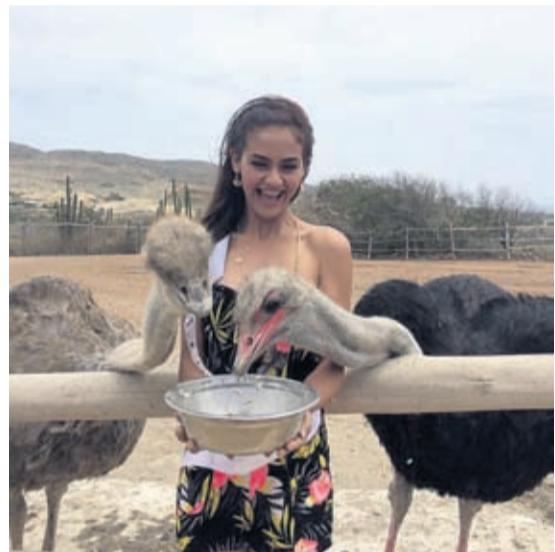
vised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family! □

The Ostrich Farm

Matividiri- One of the most entertaining vacation activities is a visit to the Ostrich Farm, a popular stopover on most island jeep tours.

Locals and visitors enjoy the guided ostrich tour at the farm and features a well-stocked locally crafted and produced Art Boutique. The highlight of the visit is always the fun interaction with the resident ostriches and emus, including a trip to the incubators and the bird kindergarten, housing baby ostriches, baby emus, chicken and ducks, and even a land turtle!

It was a National Geographic moment when on cue Mr. Ostrich flapped his wings excitedly and poked around the ground with his bill, triggering Mrs. Ostrich who ran around in circles, flapped

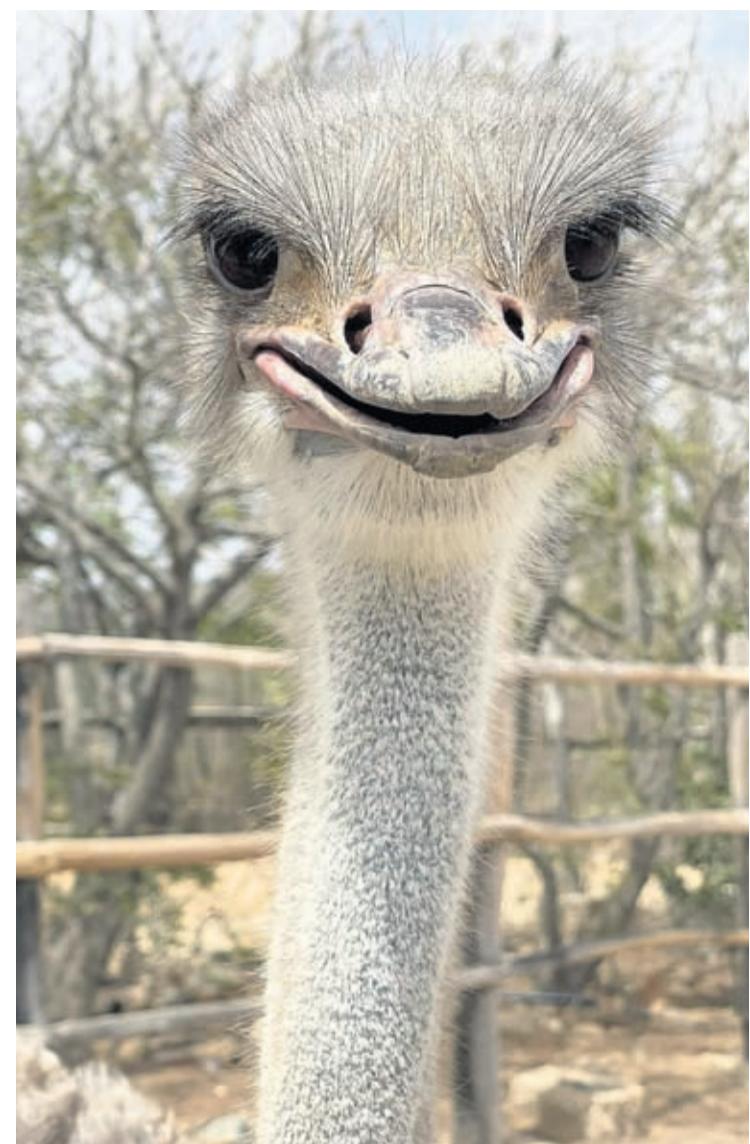


her wings and also poked around, before collapsing on the ground in a heap of feathers, allowing him to mount her, shaking, winding and spiraling his head in all directions!

Mr. Ostrich concluded his unexpected performance with a loud honking, his eyes rolling, then got up in a huff to nonchalantly strut away, leaving his wife and the scrutiny of our cameras. It was a surprise reality TV moment, and not usually included in the regular program. Feeding the Ostriches is however always on the program, and they are eternally hungry, and fun!

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Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from **Kelly Coffey**

She wrote to us saying: "The memories of joy with my incredible family. We have made so many memories over the years, sharing with many.. from honoring the memory of mom to celebrating the college graduation of my daughter. My heart is here. Thank you Aruba, and the fabulous people of this amazing island..you all are blessed."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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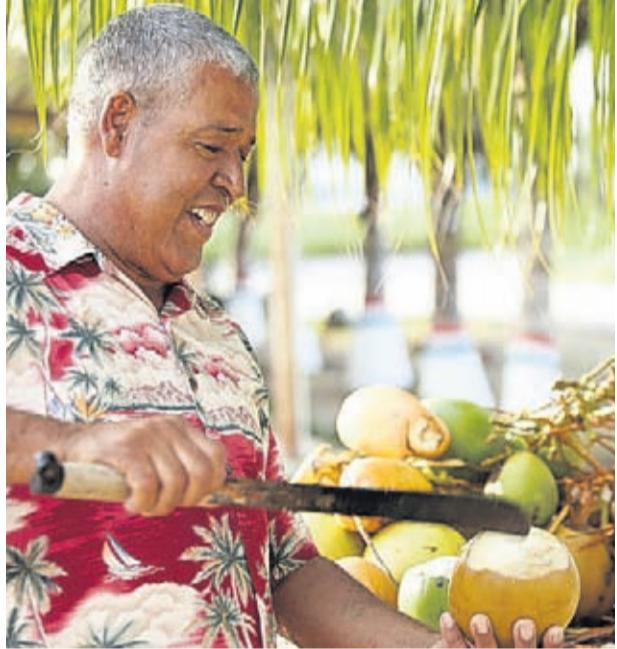


1. Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
2. Along the main road next to the airport field.
3. At the California Light House.
4. At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them!

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com

Aruban snacks and where to find them



ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the



island, including on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find pastechis and krokets at local bakeries and snack shops, like Bright Bakery in Piedra Plat, Huchada in Santa Cruz or Pastechi House in the city center. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batido shops next the flee markets downtown, or if you're on your way to San Nicolas, at Mauchi Smoothies and Juice Bar in Savaneta (located at the side of the main road).

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:



Episode 20

A Nobel Native Heart II

A slave for who his freedom was purchased by the Fiscal of the church of Alto Vista in Noord.

This slave was telling about his trip over the Atlantic Ocean and how he reached Curacao: "There are good and bad people on this world," Crisostomo started saying: "That one sad day these bad people armed with sabers and rifles came to our small village, Arabs slave traders, who were grabbing anyone they set for to trade them for gold at port. They broke in to my farm and into our house. They destroyed everything in it and had us chained up". Crisostomo had to stop telling for a while for all emotions returns with sad memories:

"We were treated worse than animals, made us walk the old road to the port.

After an hour walking we could hear that more people was joining our group guarded by some twenty armed men. There I could see that the plateau below was filled with many people lined up in chains. Woman and children separated of the men. Approaching the multitude we could start hearing the noise mixed with crying and begging for compassion. I could not watch how they were brutally whipped and others were freed of their suffering with a shot. All this created a paralyzing shock. Flabbergasted and totally terrorized we had no other choice than to survive and keep together.

I could count over two hundred people, captives, traders and hundreds of camels packed with dates, salt and others carried



bags full packed with resin for incense on their heads. We followed behind this enormous trading caravan that soon left us behind. Our group was getting larger by the day. We reached the outskirts of the port city of Oran at dark. The agonizing trip took us five and a half days which I have made in two day many times before. The cargo caravan camped town two days before, close to a lake where we all had to enter, where all the animals were drinking, it was a blessing having a chance washing up and clean ourselves a bit before they took us through the city. There we reached the plaza and loaded immediately on a ship packed all ready with people to be shipped out to the new continent. Many people died during the long march"

Crisostomo was transported on a ship called the Jupiter, along with 2,000 other slaves to Curacao, 40 or more slaves were lost at sea, from which many jumped in to the ocean to be swallowed by the waves. "If it was not for Mr.

Miguel to have freed me," Crisostomo says, probably they would have killed him in Curacao.

All this revelation was heard by Father Pedro Ramirez, a Catholic priest who lived in Caracas, who occasionally visited Aruba. Since he could understand some French, he could figure out what happened to Crisostomo's son and wife.

The following year Father Pedro Ramirez wrote a letter to Crisostomo telling him that in Caracas he had found his son Anastacio and that he would send him by ship to Aruba so that they could reunite again. Anastacio could not wait for him to reunite with his father and to tell his story, how he had arrived by boat to La Guajira where the priest Francisco bought his freedom and gave him a place to live in the monastery in Caracas.

One year after Crisostomo re-encountered his son, a ship sailing out of Maraca-

ibo en route to the Dominican Republic, ran aground in the South Western part of the island. People of Noord came over to give assistance. Among the passengers was certain Mr. Morales, a Colombian gentleman, together with his family and two servants. They all were taken to the town of Noord. One of the servants who were traveling with the Mr. Morales and family was Crisostomo's wife and Anastacio's mother Helena Petronilia. This is how an Algerian family reunites in here on our happy island.

Meanwhile, the ship had been repaired, ready to continue its voyage to the Dominican Republic with all its passengers. Morales and his family proposed to Crisostomo and Anastacio to travel with them. There, he gave Helena Petronilia back to Crisostomo, and they lived happily together again. □

Source: Island Insight column by Etnia Nativa.



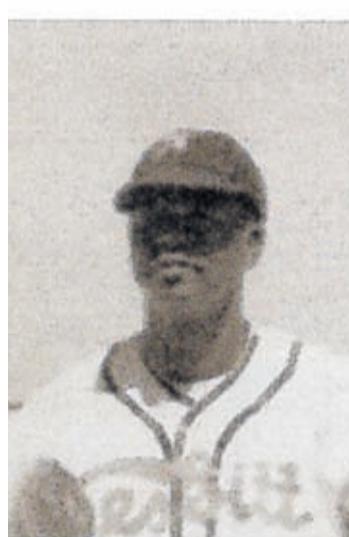
Short history of the beginnings of baseball in Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Baseball was played on the island of Aruba in the 1930's, but only by United States expatriates working for LAGO and living inside the LAGO colony. Jim Bluejacket, the legendary US Indian who had played in two major league teams, worked for LAGO during 14 years and was a key factor in the growth of the popularity of the game in the colony. There is no record of Bluejacket ever playing outside the colony.

Outside the colony, the game of baseball was introduced to Aruba by Venezuelan immigrants and sailors on the Venezuelan fishing boats that used Aruba as their home port. They formed pick-up teams and played games on Sundays on an open field behind what is now the Court of Justice. One of the Venezuelans that comes to mind is Felix Garrido, grandfather of our current Prime-Minister.

In the late 30s the leader of this group was Raúl Aparicio, a cousin of Luis Aparicio who is now enshrined in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The Aparicos were evidently very good at sports. Raúl had two brothers who also played baseball, René and Roman. Rosendo, his only brother who did not play baseball became a professional soccer player in the Venezuelan league. Rosendo was nicknamed "Cabeza de oro" (golden head) for a memorable header he scored to win a game for his team.

Interestingly, it was in Aruba that Luis Aparicio played his first game outside of Venezuela. This took place in 1950 when he played shortstop for the school he attended. Later he played for "Cabimas" in a double-header of the Venezuelan Western League. These official games of the league were authorized to be played in Aruba by the Professional Baseball Organization of Venezuela. Several others who played



in those games have also been enshrined.

Luis Aparicio's father was the super popular Luis "El Grande" (the great one) after whom the baseball stadium in Maracaibo is named. He and his brother owned the professional baseball teams "Gavilanes" which later became the "Aguilas", and the "Cabimas".

In the early '40s, another group, mostly immigrants from the Dominican Republic also became very active with pickup teams. Some of these remained active in baseball well into the early '50s; as umpires, managers even as players. Among these were Nestor "Pantin" Guerrero who also had a musical band. Perhaps not so coincidentally, many of Pantin's players were also musicians. Luthai Pantophlet who umpired many years was a well-known drummer. Gaston Hazel was a bongo player; José Bryson and the brothers Nicholson, Teddy and Julio, all played several instruments.

In San Nicolas, baseball was played on the grounds next to where the LAGO Sport Park (now Laveist Sport Park) was officially inaugurated in March 1941.

During the WWII years, baseball got a big lift from the influx of Puerto Rican and US soldiers stationed here. As LAGO was playing a very important role in the struggle against Hitler, it was able to get all the sports equipment needed here to allow more people to participate.

In the '40s only the Lago Sports Park organized baseball championship games. The first teams to participate were Artraco, (Aruba Trading Co.), Esso Garage and Botica San Lucas. In 1945 Venezuelan employees of the Lago refinery participated under the name of "Cafenol", a very popular Venezuelan coffee brand. Two other groups of Venezuelan im-



migrants formed the teams "Cerveceria" (named after the iconic team Cerveceria Caracas), and "Venezuela", although not all members of these teams were Venezuelans. This was also the year that the team sponsored by Roxy Café started to play as "Dodgers". Dodgers became the dominant baseball powerhouse till the 1950s. Other teams that entered the baseball scene in the late 1940s: Pepsi Cola (Oranjestad) and St. Thomas Boys (former students of St. Thomas College, Oranjestad). "Baby Ruth" in San Nicolas played initially under the name "Camel" and "Barnes' Ramblers" the only team consisting of Lago Colony players to participate in the Lago Sport Park championships. "Red Rock Cola" was formed in Oranjestad in 1950.

In 1952 the team Pepsi Cola became "Nesbitt's" and had players of seven countries, including two American expats from Lago Colony.

In 1950 a group of prominent members of the Aruba community founded the Amateur Baseball Bond of Aruba (ABBA) to give structure to the management of the sport and became the organizers of official championship games. While maintaining the existing teams in a league that was referred to as A-class, ABBA established a B-class league in which the "Budweiser" and "Braves" played the first years.

By 1952 Aruba became a member of the International Amateur Baseball Association and fielded a team managed by Joe Proterra,

(former pitcher of "Barnes' Ramblers"), that would play for the first time ever in the Amateur Baseball World Series that took place in Havana, Cuba in September. Surprisingly, Aruba won two of its six games and became the darling of the Havana fans. Nell Harms of the Aruban team was named the "Outstanding player of the week" for his performance against Honduras. He allowed just two hits, struck out 15 and hit the only homerun of the game. Joe Cambria, the famous scout for the Washington Senators offered him a contract, but Nel was not interested, but the next year, at the Amateur Baseball World Series in Caracas, Venezuela, Nel and Ruben Phillips did sign and in 1954 they played professional baseball the Georgia-Florida League and the Texas-New Mexico League. They were the first Arubans to play professionally, but not the only ones.

During the games in Havana, contacts were made with the organizers of Little League Baseball in Cuba which eventually resulted in the introduction of Little League in Aruba. Little League of Aruba has been extremely successful: It has produced many players who earned baseball scholarships at universities in the United States, a few who played professionally in the Netherlands and different countries in the Caribbean and five who reached the major leagues: Calvin Maduro, Eugene Kingsale, Radhames Dijkhoff, Sydney Ponson, and Xander Bogaerts one of the brightest stars of Boston Red Sox.

Written by Mr. Clyde Harms

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 38 Home

1 Tests the weight of the country

6 Jazz bits 40 Isolated

11 Cupid's missile

12 Flynn of films

13 Singer Cara

14 Plow pioneer

15 PC-linking system

16 Outback bird

18 TV's "Science Guy" Bill

19 Series-ending abbr.

20 Cowboy nickname

21 Beat walker

22 Showy flower

24 Hence

25 Asian nation

27 Fellow

29 High hits

32 Sought a seat

33 Deep hole

34 Plop down

35 French friend

36 That lady

37 Pot fill

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AGO	EEL JAG
DURHAM	DEMO
MADE	TO ORDER
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NOISY	NERDY

Yesterday's answer

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8 Tangy

for condiment

28 Mark

45 Concluded**DOWN**

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2 Book

blunders

3 Ice cream

choice

4 Cargo unit

5 Honey

6 Brought

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7 Hot blood

8 Tangy

for condiment

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10 Sacks out

11 Cornish

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13 Pert talk

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7-14

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONG FELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-14 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

T E R S K S I B T N D K P R C .

T V R R S I B T K R L R I X R K .

T B D S I B T Z I B R K V C S I B .

— V D Z K H R D X V H Z K R

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: FAITH IS TAKING THE FIRST STEP EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T SEE THE WHOLE STAIRCASE. — MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

How behavioral economics can help you save on airfare

By SAM KEMMIS of Nerd-Wallet

It's not just you: Shopping for airfare is harder than ever. Choosing between basic economy and regular economy fares and navigating add-on fees makes booking more complicated, and that's no accident. Airlines are harnessing lessons from a still-emerging academic field known as behavioral economics to nudge customers into spending more.

"Behavioral economics was developed by incorporating ideas from psychology into standard economic theories," says Cait Lamberton, a professor of marketing at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. "If you see a deal that is available for only a short amount of time, and you pay more than you usually would, standard economics would say you've made an irrational decision. Behavioral economics says that no, what your brain is doing is responding to scarcity."

These seemingly irrational choices are called "biases," many of which can affect how we shop. For example, "loss aversion" makes us hyper-sensitive to losing money and more likely to buy something like trip protection. The "decoy effect" makes us more likely to choose between two suboptimal options when a third, even worse option is presented. For example, airlines may offer a decoy like an expensive premium ticket with fewer amenities, which may make the cheaper premium ticket with more benefits look more appealing.

Airlines are well aware of



Travelers use the kiosk by the ticketing gate as they prepare for travel from Love Field airport, May 19, 2023, in Dallas.

Associated Press

these tendencies and how they drive our decisions. So to save money on flights, customers need to understand how the airfare shopping experience has been engineered to exploit our biases.

DON'T BUY BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE IS

Airlines will use a technique called "social proof" to upsell certain products, such as trip protection, by suggesting that many other travelers are adding it to their itineraries. Yet these marketing tactics don't offer much real-world value for consumers, according to experts.

Lamberton explains that those messages during the checkout process, like the number of people who have insured their trip today, shouldn't sway your decision to purchase because they often lack context. "Is that a lot of people or a few people?," she says.

BE PREPARED FOR ADD-ON FEES

Another bias that should ring true for anyone try-

ing to buy an airline ticket: "decision fatigue." That is, we tend to make worse decisions when we have to make several of them in a row.

This airline or that? Early flight or later? Pay for a window seat? Pay now for a checked bag? Upgrade to premium economy? With each decision, our ability to make ideal choices diminishes.

"Once I'm four or five clicks into purchasing this, the price has changed completely," Lamberton says, suggesting that airlines will withhold information until later in the process, when consumers are less likely to start over.

Indeed, a 2020 study published in *Marketing Science* found that customers made suboptimal decisions when prices were "dripped" throughout the checkout process, largely because of their unwillingness to start over.

Overcoming decision fatigue isn't easy. Realizing a flight is more expensive than you imagined and then starting over takes time and energy, so consider booking flights at a time when you're not in a rush and you can spend more time doing comparison shopping.

"If you want to overcome these biases, you will have to slow down and give yourself the space to pay attention to these things," Lamberton suggests. □

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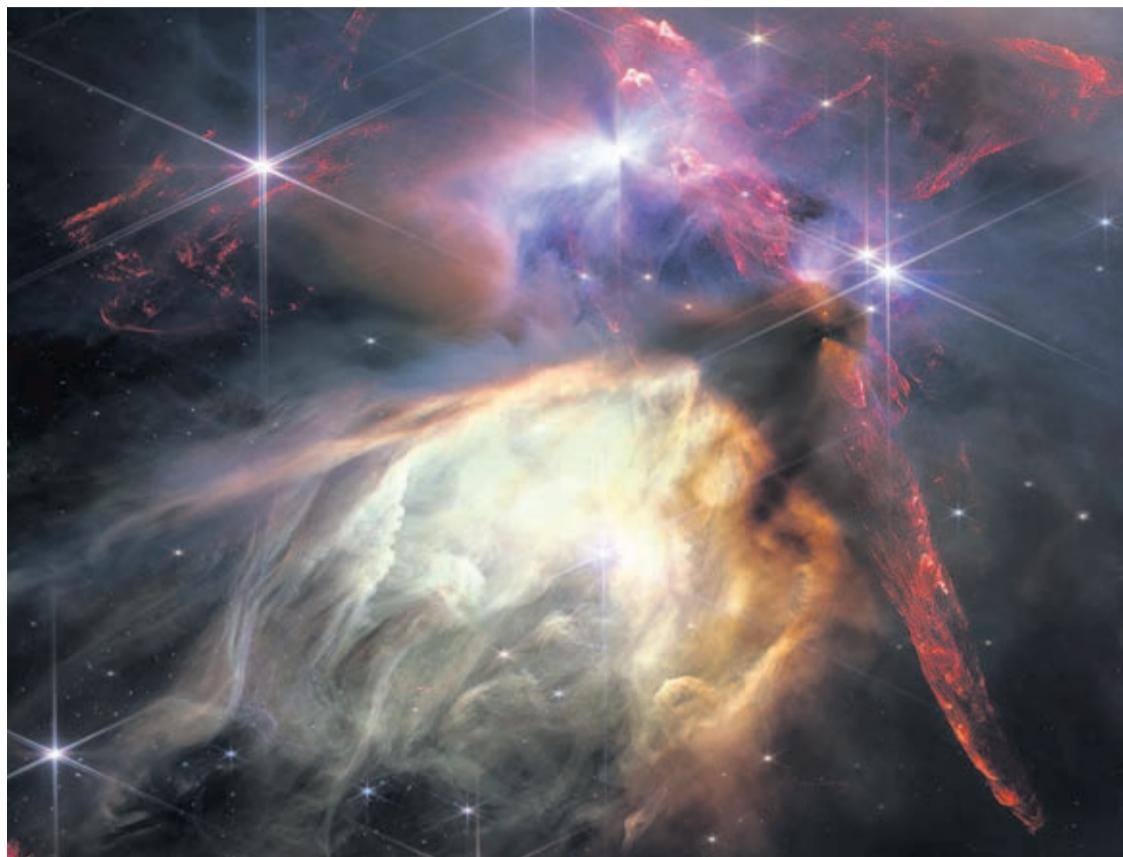
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Webb Space Telescope reveals moment of stellar birth, dramatic close-up of 50 baby stars



The first anniversary image released Wednesday, July 12, 2023, by Space Telescope Science Institute Office of Public Outreach, shows NASA's James Webb Space Telescope displaying a star birth like it's never been seen before, full of detailed, impressionistic texture. The subject is the Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex, the closest star-forming region to Earth.

By MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — The Webb Space Telescope is marking one year of cosmic photographs with one of its best yet: the dramatic close-up of dozens of stars at the moment of birth.

NASA unveiled the latest snapshot Wednesday, revealing 50 baby stars in a cloud complex 390 light-years away. A light-year is nearly 6 trillion miles (9.7 trillion kilometers).

The region is relatively small and quiet yet full of illuminated gases, jets of hydrogen and even dense cocoons of dust with the delicate beginnings of even more stars.

All of the young stars appear to be no bigger than our sun. Scientists said the breathtaking shot provides the best clarity yet of this brief phase of a star's life.

"It's like a glimpse of what our own system would have looked like billions of years ago when it was forming," NASA program scientist Eric Smith told The Associated Press.

Smith pointed out that the starlight visible in the

image actually left there 390 years ago. On Earth in 1633, Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei went on trial in Rome for saying that the Earth revolved around the sun. The Vatican in 1992 acknowledged Galileo was wronged.

This cloud complex, known as Rho Ophiuchi, is the closest star-forming region to Earth and is found in the sky near the border of the constellations Ophiuchus

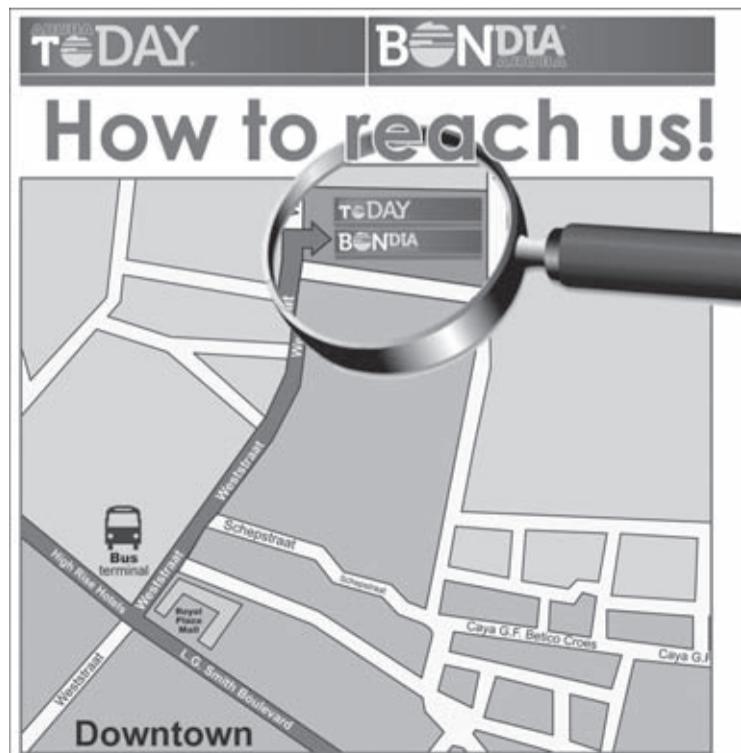
and Scorpius, the serpent-bearer and scorpion. With no stars in the foreground of the photo, NASA noted, the details stand out all the more. Some of the stars display shadows indicating possible planets in the making, according to NASA.

It "presents star birth as an impressionistic masterpiece," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said in a tweet. Webb is the largest

Associated Press

and most powerful astronomical observatory ever launched into space has been churning out cosmic beauty shots for the past year. The first pictures from the \$10 billion infrared telescope were unveiled last July, six months after its lift-off from French Guiana. It's considered the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, orbiting Earth for 33 years. A joint NASA-European Space Agency effort, Webb scans the universe from a more distant perch, 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) away.

Still ahead for Webb: Astronomers hope to behold the earliest stars and galaxies of the universe while scouring the cosmos for any hints of life on planets outside our solar system. "We haven't found one of them yet," Smith said. "But we're still only one year into the mission." □



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Cillian Murphy, playing Oppenheimer, finally gets to lead a Christopher Nolan film

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Eds: UPDATES: Recasts hed. Resends a story that first moved in May. With AP Photos. Adds photos from London premiere. ; AP Video.

The day Christopher Nolan called Cillian Murphy about his new film, "Oppenheimer," Murphy hung up the phone in disbelief.

The Irish actor, though a regular presence in Nolan films going back almost two decades, had always been a supporting player. This time, Nolan wanted him to lead.

"He's so understated and self-deprecating and, in his very English manner, just said, 'Listen, I've written this script, it's about Oppenheimer. I'd like you to be my Oppenheimer,'" Murphy, 46, told The Associated Press earlier this year.

"It was a great day."

For Murphy, it is never not exciting to get a call from Nolan. It's just hard to predict if he's going to. He knows there are some movies he's right for and some movies he isn't.

"I have always said publicly and privately, to Chris, that if I'm available and you want me to be in a movie, I'm there. I don't really care about the size of the part," he said. "But deep down, secretly, I was desperate to play a lead for him."

Murphy first met Nolan in 2003. He was brought in to screen test for *Batman* not just the movie, the character. Murphy knew he wasn't right for the *Dark Knight*, but he wanted to meet the man who'd directed "Insomnia" and "Memento." They hit it off and Murphy got to tap into a sinister intensity to play the corrupt psychiatrist Dr. Crane/Scarecrow, who would go on to appear in all three films. Nolan would also call on Murphy to be the conflicted heir to a business empire in "Inception" and a traumatized soldier in



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Cillian Murphy as Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer in a scene from "Oppenheimer," left, and physicist Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer on the test ground for the atomic bomb near Alamogordo, N.M., on Sept. 9, 1945.

Associated Press

"Dunkirk."

"We have this long-standing understanding and trust and shorthand and respect," Murphy said. "It felt like the right time to take on a bigger responsibility. And it just so happened that it was a f--- huge one."

Soon after the phone call, Nolan flew to Dublin to meet Murphy and hand him a physical copy of the script, which he devoured right there in Nolan's hotel room. It was, he said, the best he'd ever read.

Then the scale of it started to sink in.

This would be a film about the charismatic and controversial theoretical physicist who helped create the atomic bomb. Oppenheimer and his peers at Los Alamos would test it on July 16, 1945, not knowing what was going to happen. There was a non-zero chance that the heat from the explosion could set off a chain reaction that would ignite the atmosphere and literally set the world on fire. It didn't, but several weeks later the United States would drop those bombs on the Japanese cities of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing tens of thousands of people and leaving many with lifelong injuries. Soon, the United States was at work to strengthen its nuclear arsenal, developing plans to work on an even more catastrophic weapon: the hydrogen bomb.

As Nolan has said, "Like it or not J. Robert Oppenheimer is the most important person who ever lived."

"Oppenheimer," which opens in theaters on July 21, features a starry cast including Emily Blunt as Oppenheimer's wife Kitty, Matt Damon as the man who hired Oppenheimer for the job at Los Alamos, Robert Downey Jr. as a founder of the Atomic Energy Commission and many more rounding out the pivotal players in and around this tense moment in history.

"You realize this is a huge responsibility. He was complicated and contradictory and so iconic," Murphy said. "But you know you're with one of the great directors of all time. I felt confident going into it with Chris. He's had a profound impact on my life, creatively

and professionally. He's offered me very interesting roles over and I've found all of them really challenging. And I just love being on his sets."

Murphy continued: "Any actor would want to be on a Chris Nolan set, just to see how it works and to witness his command of the language of film and the mechanics of film and how he's able to use that broad canvas within the mainstream studio system to make these very challenging human stories."

Over the years, Murphy has come to appreciate that with Nolan there's always something deeper to discover than what's literally on the page. "Dunkirk," he recalled, was only 70 pages and there wasn't much to his character, not even a name.

"He said, 'Look, let's figure it out together and you and me can find an emotional journey for the character.' And we did it. We did it out in the water on that boat. That comes from trust and respect," Murphy said. "I'm really proud of that performance."

As with all Nolan endeavors, secrecy around "Oppenheimer" is vitally important. Murphy loves the "old-fashioned approach" that builds interest and anticipation.

"There's an awful lot to talk about when we can talk freely," Murphy said with a smile.

The difference from other Nolan originals, even "Dunkirk," is that "Oppenheimer" is rooted in historical fact and actual transcripts. You can read the book it's based on, Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin's Pulitzer Prize-winning "American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer." You can watch the 1981 documentary "The Day After Trinity" on The Criterion Channel.

And you can try to parse Nolan's words for clues. He's talked about recreating the Trinity test, the fascinating paradoxes, the twists, turns and ethical dilemmas; for him, the story is cinematic and both dream and nightmare. But ultimately, it's something that just needs to be seen.

"The question will be how Chris presents it," Murphy said. "I think people will be very surprised and wowed by what he does. Anything I say will just seem a bit lame as compared to seeing this in an IMAX theater."

The time for discussions will be after the movie comes out. But Murphy did offer up that they worked hard to get Oppenheimer's look right, from the narrow silhouette to the pipe and the porkpie hat. Oppenheimer, he said, "seemed aware of his own potential mythology." But, again, those conversations will have to wait.

"I'm really proud of the movie and I'm really proud of what Chris has achieved. This was, for sure, a special one, certainly because of the history with me and Chris. We were not walking around the set high-fiving, but it did feel special. □

Ion Izagirre soloes to victory in lively Tour de France stage as Vingegaard keeps overall lead

BELLEVILLE-EN-BEAUJOLAIS, France (AP) — Ion Izagirre emerged victorious from an absorbing mid-mountain Tour de France stage which started with a flurry of attacks that lasted to the end on Thursday.

The Cofidis rider posted his second career Tour stage win in the 12th stage.

The 169-kilometer (105-mile) stage took riders across the Beaujolais vineyards on a route with two big climbs in the second half of the trek. The first two hours of racing were furious, with several dozen riders dropped over the first 25 kilometers.

Izagirre attacked from a group of strong and experienced breakaway riders in the final climb the brutal ascent of the 5.3-kilometer Col de la Croix Rosier.

Tucked in an aerodynamic position, the Basque rider took all the risks in the downhill, then used his strong time trial skills to thwart his rivals' chase after a tremendous 31-kilometer solo effort.

"It's incredible. For the whole Tour so far I tried to break away and it didn't work out but today, yes," he said. "I was confident in my strength. I knew that if



Spain's Ion Izagirre celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the twelfth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 169 kilometers (105 miles) with start in Roanne and finish in Belleville-en-Beaujolais, France, Thursday, July 13, 2023.

Associated Press

I earned enough lead, my adversaries wouldn't have me in sight and it would play in my favor."

It was also the second stage win for a Basque rider after Pello Bilbao claimed Stage 10.

"It's a very Basque Tour de France. It started at home for us and we took two stage wins," said Izagirre, in reference to the Tour start

from the Spanish town of Bilbao this year.

Mathieu Burgaudeau was second in the stage, and Matteo Jorgenson completed the podium.

Izagirre's previous Tour win was in 2016 in the Alpine town of Morzine. He's also won stages at the Giro d'Italia and Spanish Vuelta. There were no major changes in the general classifica-

tion. Jonas Vingegaard kept his 17-second lead over two-time champion Tadej Pogacar after the rivals remained together throughout the day. Jai Hindley remained in third place, lagging 2 minutes, 40 seconds off the pace. The fight for the yellow jersey is expected to resume on Friday on the ascent of the Grand Colombier, a

mammoth climb in the Jura which concludes the 13th stage.

It took a long time for the break to form on a route with constant ups and downs, after a high-speed crash involving David De La Cruz and Quentin Pacher split the peloton in two. The Spanish rider abandoned, joining his Astana-Qazaqstan teammates Luis Leon Sanchez and Mark Cavendish on the list of withdrawals.

Pogacar and Vingegaard rode at the front and were among the most attacking of the leading group alongside the fiery Mathieu van der Poel and Wout van Aert.

Dylan Teuns and Tiesj Benoot finally managed to go clear after 65 kilometers as the leading pack entered the Beaujolais wine region. The pace did not slow down and riders were scattered everywhere.

The Belgian pair was joined by a dozen rivals as the attackers finally managed to open a decent gap. The breakaway included one-day classic specialists, giving it a great chance to succeed. □

Olympic gymnastics champion Gabby Douglas says she is aiming for the 2024 Paris Games

By WILL GRAVES
AP Sports Writer

Gabby Douglas, the first Black woman to win the Olympic all-around gymnastics title, is taking aim at the 2024 Games in Paris. Douglas announced on her Instagram page Thursday that she is making a comeback attempt, a dozen years after her triumph in London in 2012 and eight years after her last competition, the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

"I wanted to find the joy again for the sport that I absolutely love doing," Douglas posted. "I know I have a huge task ahead of me and I am beyond

grateful and excited to get back out on the floor."

The now 27-year-old Doug-

glas also posted video of herself practicing uneven bars, her signature event.



U.S. gymnasts and gold medallists, Simone Biles, left and Gabby Douglas celebrate on the podium during the medal ceremony for the artistic gymnastics women's team at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Douglas is the second Olympic champion in recent weeks to say they are pointing toward Paris.

Simone Biles, who won the all-around gold in Rio and was teammates with Douglas on the five-woman U.S. squad that cruised to the team gold in Brazil, is returning to competition at the U.S. Classic in Chicago in early August.

Douglas has yet to outline a timeline for when she might be ready to join what will be a very crowded field to make what could be a loaded American team under the rings next summer. Douglas could petition USA Gymnastics for a spot at

the U.S. Classic. She had not done that as of Thursday afternoon but still has ample time to do so. There is no petition deadline for the event, set for Saturday, Aug. 5 at NOW Arena in the Chicago suburbs. Douglas became one of the faces of the 2012 Olympics after her brilliant performance in the all-around final helped her become the third straight American woman to claim the biggest title in her sport. She became a crossover star in the aftermath, winning AP Female Athlete of the Year in 2012, writing her autobiography and having her life story turned into a TV movie. □

Associated Press

Ons Jabeur is in a second consecutive Wimbledon final

By HOWARD FENDRICH

AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP)

— There was a time a year ago; six months ago, even that Ons Jabeur might not have recovered from the deficit she found herself in during the Wimbledon semifinals. Down a set. Down a break in the second set. So close to being just a game from defeat. She credits a sports psychologist with helping her understand how to deal with those on-court situations, with managing to keep her focus, keep her strokes on-target. Thanks in part to that, and a steadiness down the stretch at Centre Court on Thursday, Jabeur is on her way to a second consecutive final at the All England Club and her third title match in the past five Grand Slam tournaments.

Now she wants to win a trophy. The sixth-seeded Jabeur earned the right to play for one again by beating big-hitting Aryna Sabalenka 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-3. "I'm very proud of myself, because maybe old me would have lost the match today and went back home already. But I'm glad that I kept digging very deep and finding the strength," said Jabeur, a 28-year-old from Tunisia who already was the only Arab woman and only North African woman to



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur celebrates beating Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus to win their women's singles semifinal match on day eleven of the Wimbledon tennis championships in London, Thursday, July 13, 2023.

reach a major final.

"I'm learning to transform the bad energy into a good one," Jabeur said, explaining that she was able to get over the anger she felt after the first set. "Some things I have no control over: She can ace any time. She can hit the big serve, even if I have a break point. That's frustrating a bit. But I'm glad that I'm accepting it and I'm digging deep to just go and win this match and, hopefully, this tournament."

To do that, Jabeur will need to get past Marketa Von-

drousova, a left-hander from the Czech Republic, on Saturday. Vondrousova became the first unseeded women's finalist at Wimbledon since Billie Jean King in 1963 by eliminating Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-3.

Like Jabeur, Vondrousova has been to a major final before. Like Jabeur, she's never won one, having been the runner-up at the 2019 French Open as a teen.

"We're both hungry," Jabeur said. So far, Jabeur is 0-2 in Slam finals. She lost to Elena Rybakina at the All

England Club last July and to Iga Swiatek at the U.S. Open last September.

Jabeur's win over No. 2 Sabalenka, the Australian Open champion in January, followed victories against three other major title winners: No. 3 Rybakina, No. 9 Petra Kvitova and Bianca Andreescu.

"I want to make my path worth it," Jabeur said. Thursday's triumph, which came by collecting 10 of the last 13 games, prevented Sabalenka from replacing Swiatek at No. 1 in the rankings.

Associated Press

"I had so many opportunities," said Sabalenka, a 25-year-old from Belarus who was not allowed to compete at Wimbledon last year because all players from her country and from Russia were banned over the war in Ukraine. "Overall, I didn't play my best tennis today. It was just, like, a combo of everything. A little bit of nerves, a little bit of luck for her at some points."

Jabeur trailed 4-2 in the second set when she began to turn things around. But not before Sabalenka came within a point from leading 5-3 after Jabeur put a forehand into the net and fell onto her back on the grass of Centre Court. She dusted herself off and broke to take that game and begin the comeback. When she delivered a backhand return winner to force the match to a third set, Jabeur held her right index finger to her ear, then raised it and wagged it as she strutted to the changeover.

Sabalenka's shots missed the mark repeatedly. She finished with far more unforced errors than Jabeur: The margins were 14-5 in the last set and 45-15 for the match.

"I was little bit emotionally down, then she was up," said Sabalenka, who hit 10 aces but also double-faulted five times. □



Dick Vitale prepares to announce an NCAA college basketball game between Michigan State and Kentucky, Nov. 15, 2022, in Indianapolis.

Associated Press

ESPN's Dick Vitale diagnosed with cancer for a 3rd time

By The Associated Press

Longtime ESPN college basketball analyst Dick Vitale says he has been diagnosed with cancer for a third time.

Vitale tweeted Wednesday that he had surgery in Boston this week, and tests revealed that he has vocal cord cancer. He said he will undergo six weeks of radiation treatments.

"I plan to fight like hell to be ready to call games when the college hoops season kicks off in the fall," Vitale tweeted, adding that his doctor "feels that scenario is entirely possible."

The 84-year-old Vitale has previously been treated for melanoma and lymphoma. He celebrated being cancer-free in April of last year.

Vitale has been with ESPN since 1979, the year the network launched. He called ESPN's first college basketball broadcast. He's also a longtime fundraiser for cancer research. Vitale helped friend Jim Valvano to the stage at the 1993 ESPYs, where Valvano delivered his famous "Don't give up" speech. Valvano died of adenocarcinoma less than two months later. □